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SUBJECT: GUINEA-BISSAU: SANHA, YALA PREVAIL IN SOUND PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTION

REF: DAKAR 696

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Guinea-Bissau's presidential election took place without major incident on June 28. All observers, including those from Embassy Dakar, agreed that the election was technically sound. Voter turnout was low, due in part to recent violence (reftel) and the re-use of voter lists compiled 12 months ago. African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) candidate Malam Bacai Sanha received 39 percent of the votes cast and will face former President and Party for Social Renewal (PRS) candidate Kumba Yala, who garnered 29 percent of the vote, in a second round of balloting on August 2. END SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

¶2. (SBU) On June 28, Guinea-Bissau held a presidential election to replace its slain former president, Joao Bernardo "Nino" Vieira. The three weeks of official campaigning were muted due to the March assassinations of Vieira and armed forces chief of staff General Tagme Na Wai and the June killings of presidential candidate Baciro Dabo and former Minister of Defense Helder Proenca. Independent candidate Pedro Infanda dropped out of the race citing a lack of security.

ELECTION DAY

¶3. (SBU) The election took place without incident and was well-organized, well-executed and without any notable tension. PolCouns and EmbOffs observed the balloting in Bissau, Mansoa, Bissora, Bafata, Gabu, and surrounding rural areas. Although U.S. Embassy observers noticed some very minor irregularities such as improperly sealed ballot boxes, none noticed any dubious or fraudulent activities. The presence of candidates' representatives at all polling stations for the entire day, from the opening of polls to the counting of votes, helped to minimize irregularities. Additionally, observers from nations and organizations including the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Kingdom, and the European Union (EU) agreed that the election proceeded in a smooth and transparent manner, void of any irregularities.

¶4. (SBU) Although voting proceeded smoothly, voter turnout was noticeably lower than during the November 2008 legislative elections. Voter turnout was approximately 60 percent, with significant variations between regions and ethnic groups. For example, turn-out was reportedly very low among the Papel ethnic group, ostensibly because they were protesting the assassination of former president Vieira, who was Papel. The EU observation mission noted that "the climate of insecurity and fear observed mainly in the capital, Bissau, may have contributed to the voters' apathy and lack of enthusiasm during the campaign compared to past elections and to a possible increase in the level of abstention."

ELECTION RESULTS

15. (SBU) On July 2, the National Electoral Commission (CNE) announced the unofficial results. African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) candidate Malam Bacai Sanha received 133,786 votes cast, or 39.5 percent. Party for Social Renewal (PRS) candidate Kumba Yala garnered 99,428 votes, or 29.5 percent. Independent candidate Henrique Rosa secured 81,751 votes, or 24 percent, thereby failing to win a spot in the second round. (NOTE: In accordance with the Bissau-Guinean electoral code, if no candidate wins more than 50 percent of the vote, the two candidates receiving the most votes will compete in a run-off election. END NOTE) On July 1, Rosa conceded defeated, congratulated Sanha and Yala, and called on all parties to accept the results. On July 2, following the release of the official results, Sanha and Yala both publicly accepted the findings of the CNE.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Sanha's strong showing appears to be more of a result of the organizational capacity of the PAIGC political machine rather than an endorsement of the government of Prime Minister and PAIGC President Carlos Gomes Jr. Indeed, public dissatisfaction with Gomes' government combined with Yala's relentless and scathing campaign attacks on Gomes and the PAIGC, likely propelled Yala into second place. It is unlikely, however, that Yala will prevail in the second round, as most of Rosa's supporters will likely throw their support behind Sanha. END COMMENT.

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